



MSDE BULLETIN

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HRABOWSKI URGES STATE BOARD TO CONTINUE CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Freeman Hrabowski III may have minced words before, but no longer. "I'm 50 now," he explained. "I'm just going to tell the truth."

Dr. Hrabowski, long-time president of the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, and a tireless advocate for African American student learning, provided the Maryland State Board of Education last week with his vision for K-12 education. He said that educators must continue their search for successful models of academic achievement for all students, and put a spotlight on best practices.

The best way to assure success is to build a network of support for children, Dr. Hrabowski said. The author of two books on high achieving African American students, he has found that nearly all success stories have at their core a parent, relative, or other significant figure pushing and prodding the student.

The right attitude – a belief that high achievement is possible – is another contributing factor, according to Dr. Hrabowski. "Even the poorest kid can be a success," he said.

Dr. Hrabowski urged that State Board members continue their fight to eliminate the achievement gap between Caucasian/Asian students and other groups of students. Among his other remarks:

- Parents must learn how to properly love their children. "If you are simply buying your child good tennis shoes and not helping them with reading, you are not loving your child," he said.

- A key to extending academic success is to convincing students to take ownership in their achievements. "A child has to learn the "my hard work pays off," Hrabowski said.
- Teaching must be made as prestigious as possible, and teaching in specially challenged schools even more so. "When a teacher is good, we promote her out of the classroom," Hrabowski noted. "That's the stupidest thing we can do."
- While Maryland puts a premium on student success, Hrabowski said that even more should be done. The General Assembly should make it at least as high a priority "as building stadiums in the state." ■

GUIDELINES REVISED FOR MARYLAND'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AWARDS PROGRAM

The Maryland State Board of Education last week revised guidelines for recognizing schools for student achievement, putting even more emphasis on improving the performance of racial/ethnicity groups and students who receive special services. The State Board annually distributes \$2.75 million designated by the state for rewarding schools that show substantial improvement in meeting the standards of the Maryland School Performance Program.

"These revisions allow us to recognize schools for improving the performance of those students who often present the most challenges," said State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick. "If we want to raise achievement levels of students across the state, we need to pay particular attention to meeting the learning needs of special populations."

Dr. Grasmick recently asked a group of educators, business people and parents to review the awards criteria and recommend ways to improve the school recognition program. The group looked at ways to distribute the funds more broadly among schools and school systems and ways to make the program more compatible with the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

"These revisions will also allow us to recognize more schools across the state and to make clearer how much we hold the performance of subgroups a high priority," Dr. Grasmick said.

The revised guidelines will be used to recognize schools for their performance on the 2000-2001 Maryland School Performance Report. The awards, funded in the current state budget, will be presented this fall.

The revised program includes two awards. Ninety percent of the \$2.75 million will be used to present a new School

(more)

GUIDELINES REVISED FOR MARYLAND'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AWARDS (Cont.)

Improvement Award for Subgroup Performance that will recognize schools for raising the achievement levels of individual groups of students by at least five points over the previous year in reading and/or math. Ten percent of the funds will be used for the School Improvement Award for Overall Performance which will take into account all the subject areas measured on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), using the same criteria as in past years.

Dr. Grasmick said revisions in the recognition program will likely be needed during the next three years as the state implements the Maryland School Assessment and extends the program to high schools with the phasing in of the High School Assessments. ■

WESTPORT ACADEMY RELATIONSHIP REVIEWED BY STATE BOARD MEMBERS

Victory Schools' work at Baltimore's Westport Academy has received high marks from parents, but Academy staff admit that achievement results thus far have been mixed.

The Maryland State Board of Education at last week's meeting continued its ongoing review of Baltimore City schools, taking an extended look at Victory Schools management of Westport Academy. Victory Schools is a private contractor brought in to manage the former Westport Elementary after it was placed under state reconstitution.

The State Board amended its contract with Victory Schools, changing the payment structure to provide for a management fee and distribution based on student performance.

Margaret Harrington, chief operating officer of Victory Schools, said there are signs of improvement at the school. After only one year under the wing of Victory Schools, a new curriculum and a new culture has been installed. A longer class day was instituted and classroom improvements were made. At the same time, however, the changes did not immediately result in improved test scores for all classes. ■

STATE RECEIVES AWARD FROM NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

The Maryland State Department of Education and the family leadership team at MSDE have been named recipients of a Partnership State Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The 2001-2002 award honors systems that have developed outstanding programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

Maryland had the only statewide program receiving the honor. Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools, said the state's program has benefited from the "strong and consistent leadership" of State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick.

The state was cited for such programs and initiatives as a new state policy requiring all school systems and schools to develop long-term programs for partnerships; a prominent placement of family and community involvement in MSDE's strategic plan; and an interdepartmental team that focuses on family and community involvement.

For more information on school and community partnerships, see the National Network's Web site, www.partnershipschools.org ■

CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH, SEPTEMBER 15 THROUGH OCTOBER 15

Late September and Early October is Hispanic Heritage Month. During this month, U.S. Latinos are recognized for their accomplishments and students are informed of the opportunities for Spanish speakers in the U.S. and abroad.

Several Web sites have been put together by the Smithsonian Institution to help in the celebration:

- Encyclopedia Smithsonian: U.S. Latino History and Culture, <http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/latino.htm>
- One Hundred and Fifty Years of Research on Latin America, an interactive exhibition, http://www.si.edu/history_and_culture/latino
- Young Americanos Virtual Gallery Exhibition Service, http://www.youngamericanos.net/gallery_main.html
- Hispanic Heritage Month Events, Montgomery County, <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/Hispanic.html>

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